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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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The Supply of Weapons to the Afghan Nationalist Forces

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The Afghan insurgents have been relatively successful in avoiding the Soviet offensive in eastern Afghanistan over the past month. While casualties have been high, many insurgents have been able to escape over the border into Pakistan or to fade into the rugged, mountainous terrain. From there, they have mounted successful guerrilla operations aimed at isolated Soviet or Afghan units, lines of communications, and districts not heavily defended by Soviet or Afghan Army forces. In other parts of the country, insurgent activity continues at a high level, and little of the countryside is under government control.

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The nationalists' ability to sustain such operations will depend on the continued availability of weapons and ammunition. Needs for equipment vary widely throughout the country, often depending on the Soviets' ability to disrupt supply links across the Afghan border and on the strength of the Afghan or Soviet forces in the area.

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So far, the insurgents have obtained the bulk of their weapons--mostly rifles, mortars, machine guns, and occasionally tanks and armored personnel carriers--from retreating or deserting Afghan troops and by ambushing supply convoys. They also obtain weapons through the local arms market in western Pakistan, where they purchase locally manufactured or imported weapons and arms stolen from the Afghan or Pakistani armies.

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This memorandum was prepared in the Regional Analysis Division of the Office of Strategic Research. Comments and/or queries may be directed to

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25X1 Afghan soldiers still with their units have been a continuing source of material, particularly ammunition. Soldiers regularly cache part of their allotment of ammunition and sell it to the insurgents for cash; the Afghan Army has long had difficulty paying its soldiers on time. Local government officials have struck bargains with nationalist groups, providing food, medicine, and other supplies as well as freedom of movement through government checkpoints in exchange for protection for their families. [REDACTED]

The insurgents also receive small amounts of arms from a variety of outside sources, but so far this aid has had a minimal impact on the capabilities of the nationalist forces. [REDACTED]

- Pakistan has probably provided the most aid so far, although we have little information on the types or amount of equipment it has given the insurgents. Most of the equipment delivered to date apparently has been ammunition, mines, rifles, machine guns, and hand grenades. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- The Afghan government claims the Chinese are providing arms and training for Afghan insurgents, but we have been unable to document such aid. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- The Iranians have provided little material aid to the insurgents, although some humanitarian aid has been given to refugees on the Iranian side of the border. Afghan
- [REDACTED]

- Aid from other Middle Eastern states has also been limited. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

-- Exile leaders have apparently purchased some small arms in Western Europe through arms dealers [REDACTED]

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The insurgents almost certainly will continue to try to avoid pitched battles with Soviet or Afghan government forces. They have not been deterred by the Soviets, however, and if anything the insurgency may be more pervasive than at any time since it began. In order to achieve a measure of success against any large-scale Soviet assault they require a continuing supply of weapons, mines, and ammunition. [REDACTED] the single most effective Soviet weapon has been the MI-24 helicopter, and few Afghans have weapons to combat them. A shortage of antitank weapons has also hampered nationalist operations. [REDACTED]

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The insurgents have a continuing need for money, medical supplies, food, and clothing. Gas masks or other antidotes against chemical weapons might also be useful in combatting Soviet or Afghan chemical attacks. [REDACTED]

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This memorandum was prepared for the DCI to be used as background material for the SCC meeting on 4 April. It reviews the Afghan insurgents' arms requirements and sources of supply. The memorandum was coordinated with EF/A and Task Force Charlie.

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Acting Chief
Asian Branch, SR/RA

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